

The Regional (European) Dimension of the Georgian Higher Education Reform

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

My motivations when choosing the topic for my present master thesis were the motivations of both – of a researcher and simply of a Georgian. The processes taking place in Georgian HE system are complex and so far not substantially studied. The empirical data and practical changes taking place in this system need their interpretations within relevant theoretical frameworks. The regionalization (Europeanization) and globalization (Americanization) processes influencing the national system since the collapse of the Soviet Union through shifts in governance forms and structural changes are featuring the new system. The ultimate characteristics of this system are hard to predict but the entire process clearly has its directions. With my thesis I tried to contribute to identifying these directions and to find relevant theoretical match in modern HE literature to the processes taking place in Georgian HE system today.

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Many thanks to my classmates and dearest friends Panteha Pedram and Catherine Batac, also to Stian Alexander Skandsen and to my family for being supportive throughout my work.

Tusen Takk!

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background for the theme

The increasing economical, political and cultural interconnectedness between the modern states has logically influenced the systems of Higher Education (HE) of individual countries.

The collapse of communism and of Soviet Union which removed the iron frame has been perceived by western experts as the final liberalization of the world for capitalistic mode of free market and knowledge economy in global development. As Manuel Castells puts it “*the integration of resulting economic ruins into the global economy is the last frontier for the expansion of capitalism. These economies can hardly survive without linkages to the world system of circulation of capital, commodities, and technology*” (Castells, 2000:136)

Having inherited these very ruins of socialist system, Georgia, one of the 15 post-Soviet republics is still going the long and painful path of reforming itself on all structural levels to adapt to the new environment of different rules and values common to the international community and guided by the technologically most advanced western societies.

Having a history and culture identified as one of the most ancient in the world, unique language and alphabet, literary and educational traditions going back to the 3rd century B.C., Christianity as state religion from 334 A.D, and a geopolitically important location, Georgia happened to be part of many empires, straggling and achieving relatively short periods of independence throughout the history. Being last annexed by the Russian empire and later by the Soviets, Georgia shared its structural features on all system levels with the rest of the Soviet republics. Accordingly, the HE system of Georgia was integrated into the Soviet system of education for 70 years – a highly politicized, planned-market oriented system, violating the Humboldtian ideals of academic freedom in research and scholarship, though still capable to implant strong traditions in research as well as general education into its ideologically governed institutions.

Thus, the *Regional Dimension* in HE is not purely new for the Georgian national system of education. It is not a new paradigm for Georgian HE system, nor a shift from one supranational-regional context into another – the Soviet space for HE had already been dissolved when the European space for HE started to be created through the Bologna process. Most East European states with a socialist past including Russia itself are part of the same newly created European space for higher education together with Georgia. Relevantly, the new regional dimension for Georgian HE should be seen as a substitution for its old regional context. It should be underlined that this substitution of one regional form by another in the Georgian HE system was made by no means smoothly and constantly, but was preceded by a rather chaotic period of deconstruction of the old system. After collapse of Soviet Union this chaotic period lasted for more than a decade in HE as well as other systems of Georgia. Declined economy resulted in failure of the state to ensure the further quality of HE as well as to provide it with necessary funding. This caused a degradation of the system, which “embraced” the industrial features of education in terms of a non-existing market. The “private sector” in HE emerged. Universities were given permission by the Ministry of Education to seek for additional funding through student fees. The number of universities increased to more than 200 for the Georgian population of just 4.5 million. Meanwhile many qualified academics with foreign language skills started to leave the country. Long educational traditions stimulated the youth to enter HE in large numbers in spite of the low quality of teaching and inadequacy of study-programs to the market-demands. The number of HE diploma holders increased to almost universal scales while only the minority of university graduates would find the job relevant to their qualifications.

It was only after the Rose Revolution in 2003 that constructive reforms in the Georgian HE system started. The university accreditation mechanism was established. The number of HE institutions significantly decreased. The old corruptive entrance examination mechanism at individual universities was changed by introduction of a National Examination procedure; and a student-support grant system was established. There are still ongoing reforms on different levels of the system. But the most notable event for Georgian HE was joining the Bologna process which aims to create a common European space for Higher Education by 2010. This is the very line of *Regionalization* in terms of *Europeanization* taken by the Georgian HE system while striking to enter the stage of a knowledge-based economy.

The Europeanization of the Georgian HE system means more than mere integration of a national system of education with other systems of HE education of Europe in order to adopt common structures and quality assurance mechanisms and promote student and staff mobility. We may identify three main dimensions of Georgian HE reform: a regional dimension, a political and economical dimension and national and cultural dimension. In my opinion, the regional dimension is to be seen as integrative for the two other dimensions into entire process of reform. It is a fact that during the shift between the old and new regional dimensions in the context of Georgian HE (1991-2004), the line of reforms failed to provide with any rational foundation for the new HE system in Georgia. This is why it is important to analyze the role of the *regional dimension* in the current reform of the Georgian HE system, to identify its boundaries, strengths and weaknesses on the national level and the linkage to the wider globalization and internationalization processes. We can see *Europeanization* as a key process with which the Georgian national system is entering the global context of HE transformations. Translating the concept of *Region* from modern political theories (Katzenstein, 2005) into the field of Higher Education will also enable us to see and explain the linkage between European and American influences simultaneously present in Georgian HE reform and giving bases to a somewhat hybrid system. The Georgian case can also be used as an example for linking the *regional dimension* to the *global dimension* of HE reforms involving the HE systems of Bologna-member states in general. The changing relationship of Georgian government towards HE institutions in the contexts of Europeanization and globalization will be identified in the present thesis. And finally, the advantages and possible threats given by supranational context of the reform to the national level of the system will be discussed. It is a fact that “*In this 21st century marketplace, the richer countries strive to attract and retain the world’s best-trained minds in many ways.*” And accordingly, “*The rising international mobility of skilled human resources can have positive as well as negative effects on countries at all levels of development*” (World Bank, 2002: 17-18). The Bologna process is unifying countries with different political and economical backgrounds and educational traditions. Relevantly, the common space will place each individual state in different position within its framework, and if careful considerations of national and supranational aims are not made by the policy-makers, Georgian HE alongside with many East European states may develop into peripheral system losing the long tradition in science and research.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question of the present analyses is defined as:

What is the role of the Regional Dimension in the reform of Georgian HE system?

The broad scope of research question gives several possibilities for interpretation. Thus, the following sub-questions will help us to specify the topics of future analysis:

1. What is the global context of the Regional Dimension in the Reform of the Georgian HE system?

To answer this question the regional dimension of the HE reform in Georgia will be linked to the political and economical dimension and the concept of Americanization will be brought not versus but alongside to the concept of Europeanization explaining the mixed nature of advisory processes in policy-making taken by the Georgian government. The structural change of the system on European level and market-driven changes of the same system on global level will be analyzed by the example of Georgian HE. Using the concept on regionalization and its different interpretations relevant to the field of Higher Education will enable us to see the interconnectedness of the processes of regionalization and globalization. Analyzing Georgian HE reform in this context will help to explain the hybridism (European and American features) of establishing HE model in Georgia.

2. What is the impact of Europeanization on national policy-formation in the course of current HE reform in Georgia?

To answer this question the Georgian educational policy documents will be looked upon in connection to the process of integrating Georgian HE system into the entire European space for Higher Education through the Bologna process. The current Georgian Law on Higher education (2004), even though adopted one year before the Georgian minister of Education signed the Bergen Communiqué in 2005, provides us with many indications of being designed in accordance to the western patterns of HE. Analyzing other policy documents connecting the directions of the Georgian HE system to the Bologna process enables us to feature the scales to which the regional dimension influences structural and conceptual changes in the Georgian HE system.

3. What are the possible benefits and threats of Europeanization for the national system of HE of Georgia?

To answer this question a closer look at the national and cultural dimension of HE reform in Georgia will be taken. This dimension will be also linked to the regional dimension of the same reform in order to identify its possible benefits and risks while following the current line of the changes. We will try to identify to what extent the reform impacts the past traditions in teaching and research in Georgia and what are the possible benefits and risks taken by national system in this course. The supranational and national contexts of Europeanization will be compared and the advantages and disadvantages of the Georgian HE system will be identified in the set of complexity and diversity of the Bologna member states in their political and economical development.

2. Methodology

The methods used in the present research are qualitative and based on document and text analyses. The choice of this methodology is justified by the research question. The theoretical framework for the thesis is drawn from political and educational sciences. The object of this study is framed into the exploratory model though strong elements of explanatory and descriptive models are in use inside this context. It means that while trying to explore the processes taking place in the Georgian HE reform in the context of the regional dimension, the explanatory attempts on the descriptive background of Georgian HE reform and its policy-documents are made through the present research. Thus it is a theory-driven empirical study and its results are expected to be more new hypotheses. Through analyzing relevant available documents on regionalization of Georgian HE system, an inductive approach is taken and attempts at taking new insights into the Georgian HE reform process are made. The descriptive elements are used to make a retrospective look at Georgian HE system in the past and present development in order to provide with sufficient bases for exploratory and explanatory processes of this work. Theories on globalisation and regionalisation make conceptual framework for the present research.

It is generally assumed that the concept of validity is of a little relevance to qualitative research. But the policy-documents used as data in this research are sound and of high reliability. This makes expectation for high internal validity of this research. At the same time the theoretical framework (theories on globalisation and regionalisation) of the research makes basis for possibility of external generalizations of the research outcomes. These outcomes are expected to be of high external validity and also relevant to further studies.

Still, there are certain weaknesses in the present research that need to be acknowledged: it lacks data from participant observation in terms of interviews with officials from Georgian Ministry of Education and Science or other policy-makers primarily involved in the process of Georgian HE reform (due to their non-availability and my lack of time). Thus certain limitations are faced in terms of objectivity while trying to explain this process. According to Bryman, qualitative researchers are in general said to be influenced by interpretivism (Bryman 2004:279). This observation is to be found relevant to this particular study while it tries to understand the processes taking place in the HE system of Georgia and to take closer

look at the aspects of its *regional (European) dimension* in phenomenological context. It means that the present research is subdued to relatively high subjectivity in terms of empirical data collection and analyses, and the observations presented are theory leaden.

2.1 The Case study

Even though one can not name the used research strategy as a classical case study through its theoretical character and macro top-down approach to the research, the focus on the Georgian HE system to which this theme is dedicated still makes the case study as most appropriate strategy for the present research.

According to Yin (1994) a *case study* is defined as an investigation of contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. In given research, Europeanization serves as such a phenomenon in the context of current Georgian HE reform. Thus the strong feature of case study to deal with theories and documents available for the research is used, though no interviews or any micro-level data is present in this study.

Relevantly, the above mentioned types of case study: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive are used towards the same case – Georgian HE reform in the context of Europeanization. As it is perceived in general in the similar case study researches, the boundaries between these three strategies are by no means clear and sharp (Yin 1994:4).

2.2 The logic of the exploration process

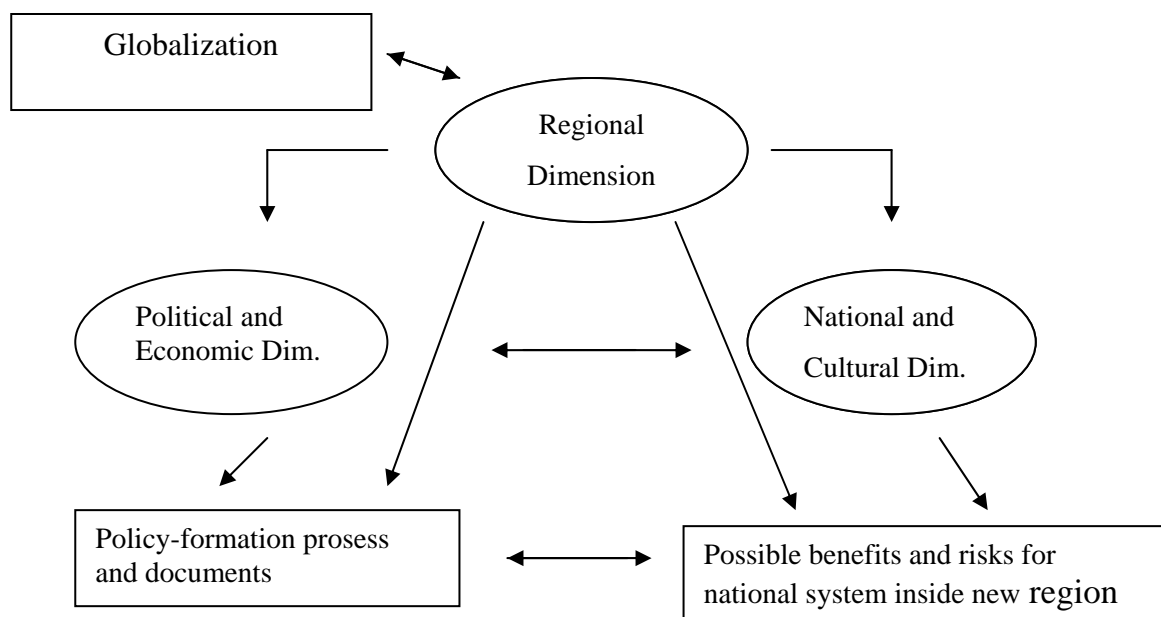
Following the logic of case study design, the Regional Dimension of Georgian HE reform is to be identified as a case of the present study. The topics of the research will be:

1. *Theories* on regionalization in relationship to globalization (seeking for explanation for the specific Georgian case – Europeanization alongside to Americanization)
2. *Policies* of HE reform in Georgia (identifying the influence of Regionalization on the process of policy-formulation in the course of HE reform in Georgia);

3. Possible Risks and Benefits of national system in the context of Regionalization

The three dimensional contexts of Georgian HE reform in which the *regional dimension* plays the leading and integrative role will serve as the framework in which the topics of analyses have their internal validity, while the nature of qualitative research and especially this specific case study design will give external validity to the research through possibilities of analytical generalizations (e.g. for other East European Countries).

Figure 1: Three-dimensional framework of Georgian HE reform for top-down macro analyses



In the three-dimensional framework of Georgian HE reform the regional dimension plays the integrative role between the political and economic dimension of the same process and its national and cultural dimension. The linkage of the reform process to globalization in HE is also constructed through regional dimension of Georgian HE reform. The research will try to explain how this linkage is established and maintained. Topics of the analyses are linked to specific dimensions to create the bounded system for the study.

3. Conceptualizations for the Theme

This chapter is dedicated to some conceptualizations and limitations. There are some key concepts in the present thesis that require clarification and theoretical framing due to their wide scope and openness for interpretation. The main concepts in this line are *regional dimension* (*Regionalization*, *Europeanization*), *Globalization* (*Americanization*), and the *Georgian HE system* itself on the current stage of its development. Also *Internationalization* as a popular concept found in HE literature and often attributed as the most relevant to the concept of *Europeanization* will be discussed. Though, the present research will use *Globalization* as a main context in which processes of regionalization in HE take place. Relevantly, this chapter will give needed descriptions and limitations of the outlined concepts in accordance to the focus of this thesis – Georgian HE system reform, and provide with the theoretical background for Globalization (Americanization) and Regionalization (Europeanization) processes. These conceptualizations are needed for describing the tensions between different processes influencing the Georgian HE system.

Figure 2: Tensions between different processes influencing the Georgian HE system

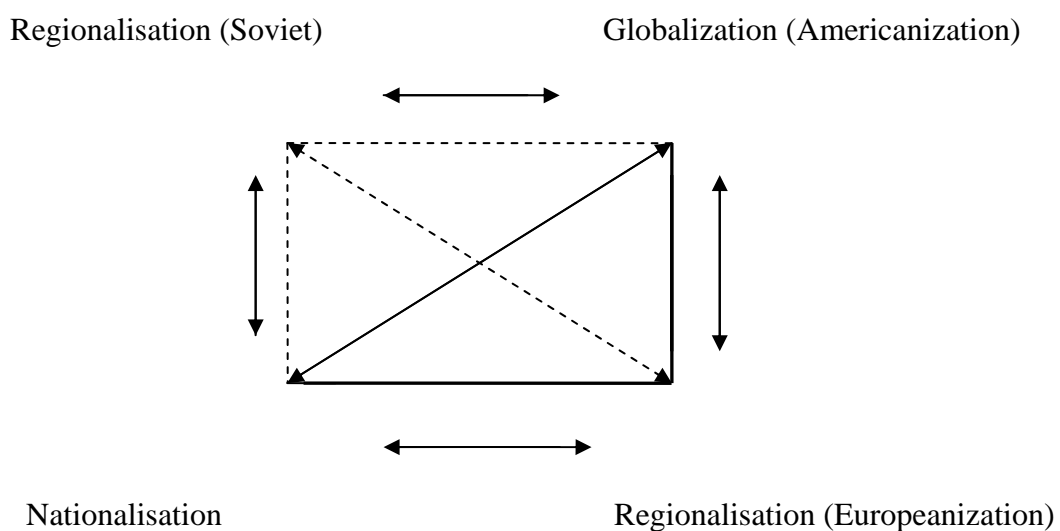


Figure 2 shows the tensions between different processes influencing the Georgian HE system in the past (dashed lines) and present (straight lines). On the present stage its old regional – Soviet dimension has been substituted by European dimension through the process of Europeanization. Globalization (Americanization) process influences the national system both – directly and indirectly. On the current stage Europeanization is the key process influencing the Georgian HE system and putting it into larger context of Globalization. Relevant conceptualizations will help us to give not merely descriptive look at the developments taking place in post-soviet Georgian HE system, but also to provide with the top-down macro analyses of HE governance and policy-formulation processes on national and supranational levels.

3.1 Globalization in relation to HE

Throughout the two decades of its existence, Globalization as a term has become extremely popular not only among academics in their endeavours to describe the increasingly rapid process of accelerated extension of certain market patterns on planetary scale, but also generally popular among the world-population. In spite of the rich academic literature being created on the Globalization phenomenon, there is still a failure to make exact conceptualization of the term. The Globalization thesis often raises scepticism and is increasingly demystified by academics themselves, while on the popular level Globalization is used as equivalent to *Americanization* and is widely perceived as a process of imposing single market-mechanism to the world, aggravating economic exploitation and social inequality, undermining the notions of national state and locality of national systems. In other words, Globalization is widely perceived as some process extending homogeneous patterns in economical relations for certain political aims. But if returning to the academic literature again, we will hardly find Globalization as attributed to some real process or the outcome of process involving certain political and economical worldwide manipulations. Vice versa: we sooner come across to the concept of “new economy” itself being described as “global” and “informational”. As Manuel Castells puts it: “*A new economy has emerged in the last two decades on a worldwide scale. I call it informational and global*” (Castells, 2000:66) Castells attributes to this “new economy” as “*informational*” in terms of

fundamental dependence of the productivity and competitiveness of units or agents in this economy upon their capacity of generating, processing and applying knowledge-based information. And this “new economy” “*is global because the core activities of production, consumption, and circulation, as well as their components... are organized on a global scale, either directly or through a network of linkages between economic agents*”. (Castells, 2000:66)

The natural birth and development of such “new economy” throughout the last 20 years may be easily justified by modern evolution of technology, which contributes to increasing possibilities of gathering, processing and producing information in increasing volumes, in compressed time and space. This very development of technology and availability of information massively increased productivity and raised competitiveness on international level. The national economies started to face the need of embracing the new market rules dictated by leading industries. The diversity of national systems, difference of resources as well as unequal bases of technological and informational tools to deal with the new environment logically puts the different countries in different positions inside this “global” economy. This kind of interconnectedness subsequently involves a political dimension: According to Castells, “The Informational, Global economy is indeed a highly politicized economy. Stepped-up market competition played on a global scale takes place under conditions of managed trade” (Castells, 2000:89). In this respect, it is evident that the reactions of individual governments acting for and against certain influences of the global market on national economies via regulatory and other policy instruments substantially affect the global frame and structure of new economy. The strong *regional* dimensions with central actors and their spheres of influence are to be also identified within this frame (United States, European Union, and Japan-centered Asian Pacific (Castells, 2000:99).

In spite of the sceptics seeing the current picture of political or economical world-order as a simple continuation of historical processes not identifying anything new about “Globalization”, it is a fact that in many respects, “*The state has become a fragmented policy-making arena, permeated by transnational networks*” (Held & McGrew, 2000:11) It becomes also increasingly clear, that “*The ability of a society to produce, select, adapt, commercialize, and use knowledge is critical for sustained economic growth and improved living standards.*” (World Bank 2002:7) The most technologically advanced economies of today are believed to be truly knowledge-based. Relevantly, the national Higher Education

systems operating on knowledge as supreme material are influenced and challenged by the above discussed processes taking place in modern world to a great extent.

There are several arguments to be used further to demonstrate the closer linkage of the context of *Regionalization* to the context of *Globalization* than to *Internationalization*, another phenomenon or process of the interest which could be described as more promoting the collaboration of individual nations with structurally different systems. In respect to Higher Education, like in general, Internationalization is a term far more popular than Globalization. These two concepts are used differently in HE literature. While the elements of “internationalization” in terms of student and scholar mobility as well as shared universal knowledge in certain fields are as old as the universities themselves, the new stage of internationalization is believed to be “*the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of a higher education institution.*” (Beerkens, 2004:16) Thus, it is a phenomenon taking place less on the system level but more on institutional and individual levels in terms of international relations, giving more organized nature to the mobility of staff and students, knowledge exchange and scientific collaboration. Internationalization in HE is not seen as a path towards globalization. They are sometimes even perceived to be contradictory. Globalization does not imply creating simply international network for universities which would collaborate while backed up by individual national systems. Globalization in HE is rather seen as a homogenization of different systems, or as a cosmopolitanization of HE in terms of taking national identity out of the HE sphere and base it on new universal features. This main feature is feared to be the “market forces” entering the HE stage which traditionally stood on strong academic values and national identity.

This is the very context of further connecting of globalization to the *regional dimension* of Georgian HE system reform in its current stage and relevantly, connecting *Americanization* to *Europeanization* of HE – the former one influencing the later process inside the global context. The specifics of the Georgian case will be identified in terms of the national HE system entering the Global dimension through the process of *Europeanization*. Thus, the present analysis is framed into a unique mixture and interpretation of the different existing theories on globalization and regionalization.

3. 2 Europeanization of HE

In modern literature on Higher Education more practical pictures of *regionalization* of HE systems rather than of *globalization* are described. The Bologna process is a good example of the regionalization in HE. It can be specified as *Europeanization of HE*. Europeanization in general is attributed to different political changes taking place on the European territory – expanding the external boundaries of Europe, developing institutions at the European level, creating central penetration of national systems of governance, exporting forms of political organization, and a process of political unification (Olsen, 2002:923-924). But in connection to HE Europeanization does not involve political features on the current stage and it “denotes internationalization within the European region.” (Gornitzka; Gulbrandse, & Trondal 2003: 22) This is the relationship in which “National Governments remain in full control of the decision process, none of them can be bound without its own consent” (Scharpf, 2000:8). This very definition links *Europeanization* more to the context of *Internationalization* of Higher Education, than *globalization*, however, in the future chapters of this thesis we will discuss the globalization as a highly relevant context to the new entire European space for Higher Education. On its current stage the Bologna process is often perceived as creating the European HE area to compete the US leadership in higher education, especially in the research area and to keep “brain circulation” of European scientists inside the region as well as to increase the attractiveness for students and scientists from all over the world. But it is also evident that in spite of strong state supervision in HE historically characterizing the European systems, the increasing changes towards marketization and massification, new managerialism reforms, shifts in governance and financing of HE observed in many national systems of HE in Europe today, also common structural changes of the degree-system is bringing the European features of HE much closer to the American model. It is already evident that the future scenario of the Bologna process can not be only about competition but also of cooperation: “There will also be greater convergence between the U.S. and Europe as European higher education adopts aspects of the American system” (“External Dimension” of the Bologna Process, 2006:45)

The Bologna Process was launched as an intergovernmental initiative aiming to create European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. The process started in 1999 with Ministers of Education from

29 European countries meeting in Bologna. They signed the declaration as an agreement upon creating European Higher Education Area by the end of the decade. The main objectives were outlined as removing the obstacles to student mobility across Europe; enhancing the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide; establishing a common structure of higher education systems across Europe, which would be based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Later the degree structure was specified into BA, MA and PhD levels becoming common for all systems of HE of participant countries. The Bologna process aims to play central role towards achieving the EU's Lisbon Strategy goals in creating a better job-market for the graduates.

“Since 1999 Ministers have met three times to assess progress towards the creation of the EHEA – in Prague in 2001, in Berlin in 2003 and in Bergen in 2005. The UK will host the next ministerial summit in London in 2007.” On the current stage Bologna has 45 participant countries and the process takes place outside the formal decision-making framework of the European Union. *“Decision-making within this process rests on the consent of all the participating countries.”*(Bologna Process)¹

By 2010 higher education systems in European countries should be organised in such a way that:

- *it is easy to move from one country to the other (within the European Higher Education Area) – for the purpose of further study or employment;*
- *the attractiveness of European higher education is increased so many people from non-European countries also come to study and/or work in Europe;*
- *the European Higher Education Area provides Europe with a broad, high quality and advanced knowledge base, and ensures the further development of Europe as a stable, peaceful and tolerant community.* (Council of Europe, 2005) ²

The Georgian Minister of Education and Science, Alexander Lomaia signed the Bergen Communiqué on 19 May, 2005. Georgia committed itself to the Bologna process which is

¹ Web document: http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process/index.cfm

² Web- document: <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/bolognaprocess.htm>

complex and challenging. It tries to give common structural features to the different systems of education throughout Europe. The process is geographically focused on the current stage though looks for external collaboration as well. The best research universities of Northern Europe with strong financial and technical base on one hand and the universities of the East European countries with the deconstructed soviet system as a background while struggling to acquire new features are examples to demonstrate the diversity of participants involved. Accordingly, the challenges, benefits and threats that the different systems and individual universities will face in the new context is also going to differ.

3.3 Historical features of the regional dimension of Georgian HE

We have already identified the *regional dimension* as historically characterizing of Georgian HE. We can also identify this dimension to be connected with the ancient features of *Internationalization* through scholar and student mobility historically present in Georgian context of education.

According to the historical sources it was in the 3rd century B.C when Georgia through cultural links with Greece got its first educational center – a school of rhetoric the so called “Pazisi academy” on its territory. Though being in constant struggle with different empires around it, with its unique ancient language, alphabet and Christian culture, Georgia succeeded in establishing strong educational tradition since the middle centuries not only inside the country but also abroad: Palestine (V c.), Syria (VI c.), Greece (X-XV cc.) and Bulgaria (XI c.). It was in the 12th century when “Gelati” academy was established by King David the Builder. It was the complex consisting of different parts including church, higher education institution and hospital. Again, the influence was of Greek origins, focusing on classical philosophy, Neo-Platonism and was offering studies of geometry, arithmetic, music, rhetoric, grammar, astronomy and medicine. Another similar complex called Ikalto academy was established in 1115-1120. In the 18th century, catholic schools were established in various big cities of Georgia. The first Georgian university was also established as a European-type university in Tbilisi, in 1918 (Tbilisi State University)³. In

³ Web document: <http://www.kura-araks-natosfp.org/partners/georgia/TSU.html>

1921 Georgia lost its independence and farther 70 years kept its different systems including the educational one into the context of Soviet ideology. The Soviet system of education was a relevant *regional dimension* of the Georgian HE system for 70 years. On its own part, Soviet system of education also took its roots from German system though changed its fundamental Humboldtian values through heavy ideological pressure.

Thus, we can argue that the Georgian HE system has been historically characterized by a *regional dimension* and on the current stage *Europeanization* can be seen as a substitution to the past regional dimension of Georgian HE which it lacked for more than a decade.

3. 4 The Context for current Europeanization of the Georgian HE system

While the existing conceptualizations on globalization meet lots of criticism and leave much space for obscurity in identifying the exact features of this process, in relevance to the present research question we take the collapse of Soviet Union as the starting point when the increasing political hegemony of neo-liberal market ideology spread itself with new intensity (Cloete & Maassen, 2002) especially in the countries with socialist past. The socio-economic and political changes in this direction entered all system-levels of the post-soviet societies including HE. But instead of direct marketization of the system through influence of US and UK models in Higher education, the East European countries, including Georgia are entering the context of Globalization through the regional, European dimension in HE. Both the geo-political situation and the comparatively closer historical similarities of nation-systems throughout this region made *Europeanization* as a more natural way for HE system-development for Georgia.

In spite of being under extreme ideological control of the soviet state, the HE system of Georgia, like of other CEE states had much similarity with the HE systems of continental European nation states. The regulatory and funding responsibilities with respect to higher education were solely provided by the state and education was perceived as a public good in Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia. This is historically similar for European states, but makes difference with US model of market-centrality and state-supervision in HE. In this later model the *neo-liberal* attitudes towards HE are rooted, through which the state promotes the market-forces to regulate the systems of HE. This model started spreading itself throughout

the world prior to the collapse of Soviet Union. The emergence of a private sector in European HE systems and new-managerialism reforms launched, also rethinking the financing models in terms of massification of HE are the examples to be found in HE system developments of European states especially from 80'ies of the past century. It can be said that in general the context of neo-liberalism was already present in Europe when post-socialist countries started to enter the area. In this context, while the globalization thesis ignores the persistence of the nation state and the crucial role of government in influencing the structure and dynamics of the new economy, evidence shows that the government regulations and policies affect the international boundaries and structure of the global economy (Castells, 2000). Individual nation states expose their systems to 'market forces' in different scales but in general, the very *Europeanization* of HE systems can be seen as an effort of creating the region with its own, still nation-oriented characteristics inside the global context. Georgia with its historical characteristics of the HE system and geo-political situation logically fitted into this area.

In Georgia, like in many other Central and East European countries, the post-soviet regimes were also marked with strong ideological nature. There was no other option but the state to be a core actor in the reforms of public sector components like HE. At the same time, "*the market and the HE institutions significantly affected the outcomes of the state-initiated reforms*" (Cloete & Maassen, 2002:33). With poor possibilities of funding and ambiguity in directions alongside to strong search of breaking with the past, the HE reforms in Georgia were marked with chaotic and unsystematic character for almost a decade. Like other post-soviet countries, Georgia had to deal with economic, cultural and social policy issues that extended beyond its territorial boundaries. In these terms we should put the changes taken place in political and social life of Georgia in the past 15 years into context of interdependence in terms of political globalization (Barrow, 2003). Due to the number of issues where the Georgian government was unable to achieve its domestic policy objectives, it had to seek for co-operation with other governments. Georgia is to be fully found inside the context of growing interdependence of nation-states through being monitored by such international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Alongside to other aspects of social change in Georgia, developments taken place in the HE system are to be closely linked to this larger context.

At this point we will return to the globalization, internationalization and regionalization theories perceived differently by different analysts. Albach (2007:14) identifies global trends as key variables in HE changes of different national systems today, though he sees importance of not exaggerating the idea of globalization in this context. In his view only the mixture of national and regional realities with the broader international and global trends is seen as bases for effective analyses of the contemporary university. Thus, such tendencies as massification and marketization found alongside of different changes taking place in many national HE systems is perceived as not only “*dictated by international agencies or the dominant economic powers*” (Albach, 2007:14) but also resulting from local realities within nations and societies.

In this direction, the Bologna process serves as a mainstream to direct the Georgian HE system towards systematic changes and sustainable development. It is a fact, that before entering the European context, all Georgian HE reform initiatives were more or less doomed to failure. The *hidden crises* (Burnett & Cnobloch, 2003) was present in the HE system of Georgia like in other systems even though the system continued functioning and formally a number of changes were taking place in it

Thus it is clear why entering the Bologna process was a breakthrough for the Georgian HE system to launch new and more realistic line of reforms. The Bologna process provided the Georgian HE system with desirable patterns to follow in the course of change to integrate itself into European and global dimensions and at the same time to preserve its national characteristics to a possible extent.

It should be also noted that in the modern world “*the regulatory frameworks within which higher education has to operate are determined by national politicians, even though supra-national decisions are having a growing influence on national regulations as, for EU member states.*” (Cloete & Maassen, 2002:51) Having non-legislative bases and acting as informal agreement of participant states to reach the common goals, in some ways Bologna extended the EU area of influence on international scales. Currently this process is still focused geographically on Europe but also it is looking towards increasing the attractiveness of European HE worldwide and acquiring an external dimension through establishing collaboration with national HE systems of geographically distant countries as well

(“External Dimension” of the Bologna Process, 2006)⁴. The Bologna process makes mutually beneficial agreement for national and international actors involved. The balance between the interests of nations with different socio-economic levels involved in the process depends both on future directions of the Bologna agreement and the objectives set by individual countries on national level.

⁴ Web document: <http://www.bolognaoslo.com/expose/global/download.asp?id=28&fk=11&thumb>

4. The Global Context of the Regional Dimension in the Georgian HE Reform

In the previous chapters we have discussed the concepts of globalization and internationalization in connection to regionalization of HE. In this chapter we will try to go deeper into identifying the global context of European trends in the Georgian HE system reform and answer the first sub-question of the main research question: ***What is the global context of the Regional Dimension in the Reform of the Georgian HE system?*** The political and economical dimension of the given reform in connection to the regional dimension creates the framework for analyzing the links between Europeanization of HE and globalization. However the Bologna process is perceived by many as creating a European challenge to the US higher education system increasingly attracting foreign students and academics. In my opinion the regionalization of European HE systems is simultaneously bringing the different national systems in more harmonization to the American model of HE. For European HE this means on one hand creating an area with future capability to compete the American HE system, but at the same time increasingly adopting many features of the same system. Individual states participating in the process have their own educational as well as political and economical aims to achieve. In my opinion the political and economic dimension of Georgian HE system reform is closely linked to the process of Europeanization in the wider context of globalization.

4.1 The political dimension of the Georgian HE system reform

In order to identify the exact features of the political and economical dimension of the Georgian HE system reform we should take a retrospective look at political developments taking place in post- Soviet Georgia.

As already stated, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave beginning to the new world-order. Increasing market-liberalization has spread itself on new territories and onto new systems. The origins of the process are to be searched back in the 20th century, post-war (2nd world war) period when American imperium started to develop policy in the interest of containing

the Soviet Union and liberalizing the world economy (Katzenstein, 2005). *Imperium* in this sense is used by Katzenstein as conjoining power of both territorial and non-territorial dimensions. In the context of the American imperium, global and international processes transform states and the relations between them. Katzenstein speaks of internationalization “as resulting from processes that are shaped by the system of states that make up different regions” (Katzenstein, 2005:2) Though after collapse of the Soviet Union, most post-socialist countries including Russia itself shifted to capitalistic mode in development, Russia and China – two out of the world’s six power centers “lie outside of American imperium; four are fully integrated (The United States, Britain, Western Europe including Germany, and East Asia including Japan)” (Katzenstein 2005:5). While the Middle East, South Asia and Africa are lacking regional core states in this context, the majority of East European states (except Belorussia) started to integrate with Western Europe on different system, ideological, political and economical levels.

Georgia, geographically lying on the verge of Europe and Asia was fully western-oriented from the very beginning of the end of Soviet empire. Actually it was the first republic in which struggle for independence was initiated in 1989. In spite of post-soviet Russia constantly interfering in its political and territorial entity, suppressing the first national government of the country and still preventing the “frozen conflicts” in Georgia’s two autonomous republics to be solved, Georgian society stayed exclusively western-oriented even in terms of political ambivalence of Georgian government during the 11 years of the “Shevardnadze period”. In November 2003, the “Rose Revolution” took place in Georgia with widely believed American support. With the goals to fight corruption eroding the existing systems, to become a member of both NATO and the European Union and to restore its territorial integrity in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, president Saakashvili and his team started reforms in all system-levels of the country, including education.

According to Cornell: “*The security and success of Georgia is very important to Western interests in general and to those of the United States in particular. Beyond the hope that Georgia represents for successful state-building and democratic development in both the former Soviet Union and the wider Middle East, this country is a key strategic pivot for the*

*transportation of Eurasia's energy resources, as well as for western access to Central Asia and Afghanistan” (Cornell, 2007).*⁵

While European interest in development of Georgia on the current stage may not precede that of American, geography and more common historical past, closeness in beliefs and values, make Europe the most desirable area for Georgians to integrate with, though this integration logically is to be found in the above mentioned context of the American imperium. Simultaneously, Russia continues to struggle for lost territories of the Soviet empire. It openly demonstrated its hostility towards the political developments taking place in Georgia through squeezing its economy by manipulating with energy resources, trade and transport embargo and supporting the de-facto governments in two autonomous republics against territorial integrity of Georgia.

Changes taking place in the Georgian HE system are partly connected and at the same time independent of these political circumstances. They are connected because of the following:

1. In spite of reform efforts during the post-soviet period in HE there is no precedent of systematic change towards European direction to be found in Georgia and actual reform took place only after “Rose Revolution”.
2. In spite of different historical values and beliefs embodied in their universities European national systems of HE increasingly accept American features and thus subdue education as one of the most resistant sphere to the global change. On the current stage this change is relative, with local peculiarities in different national systems on different levels. The Regional dimension created through the Bologna process gives simultaneously competitive and collaborative bases to European higher education towards American higher education. In this way, education, which has always been the most resistant to change increasingly finds itself as part of the European regional context inside the American imperium. The Georgian HE system is relevantly influenced by this process. This also explains the simultaneous presence

⁵ Web document: <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/0703USAWC.pdf>

of American and European advisory processes throughout Georgian HE reform with no controversial but complimentary character.

The Georgian HE system reform with its regional dimension can also be described partly independent of this political context because the Bologna process spreads itself on a large area including Russia and does not represent any political process bounding the participant countries to any primary territorial order but merely attributes to the sphere of higher education. It can be assumed that due to the geographical location of the country and its history in education, and internationally increasing economic interdependence of the countries, sooner or later Georgian HE system would find itself inside the process. In my opinion, the political aspect of the political and economic dimension of Georgian HE reform significantly strengthens and even drives but does not uniquely build up its regional dimension.

4. 2 The Global economic context of Europeanization in Georgian HE

Though the Bologna process is inter-governmental process with non-regulatory bases and supportive to national diversities of HE systems of participant countries, some experts primarily speak of the major economic aims of the process. According to Cerych: *“With or without Bologna or Prague, and even with or without ERASMUS and the EU there would be an increasing pressure on graduates and students of different European countries to move from one system to another. Bologna-Prague and the EU make simply these movements easier”*(Cerych, 2002:124). This pressure on student and staff mobility can be easily explained by the influence of globalization on HE. In terms of massification, HE increasingly loses its elitist nature and starts to seek for responsive ways to the social and economic demand. *“Globalization ‘encouraged’ higher education to become business like... during the late 1980s and particularly the 1990s, higher education institutions gradually started seeing fee-paying students as a source of revenue and this led to the development of an international market for higher education students”* (Cloete & Maassen, 2002:31).

The American example serves as the oldest in terms of introducing the market dimension in higher education as a central vehicle in the complex relationship between higher education

institutions, government, academic and non-academic actors involved, students and society in large. Appearance of the private sector in HE as a response to increasing demands of society on HE with more and more participants involved in the process, massification and diversification of the system contributed to the changing responsibilities of national governments taken towards the HE. Government, as traditional “patron” of HE historically providing the legislative and financial bases for the functioning of HE institutions started to see the increasing dimensions and volumes in the system to be unmanageable with the old attitudes. Thus, the autonomy of HE institutions started to be increased, the financial subsidies from the government decreased, while the legislative function sustained. Not only the private, but also the public sector, started to be subdued to the new rules: more flexibility in internal policy-making, more fundraising responsibility and less dependence on governmental funding. The American system of HE appears more and more successful on the global stage in terms of research productivity of its universities as well as easily managing the massification problems through diversification and marketization of its HE system.

In most European countries the market-oriented change in government-HE relationship is rather slow. The democratic principles of building up knowledge society, promoting equality and equity for all citizens in terms of HE and not subduing historical beliefs and values to the market perspective is still central in a number of European countries. Scandinavia and Germany could easily serve as examples of the HE systems functioning without student fees or with minor student fees at the public universities, with a minor private sector and with strong idealistic beliefs in education as a public good. But in spite of all this resistance, European systems clearly face increasing demands on HE and shortage of necessary governmental funding to meet these demands. In these terms, the mixed-funding approach becomes more and more popular in Europe and gives a perspective of diversified systems in the future where the proportion of public-private contributions to HE will be estimated according to political ideologies of individual countries. Giving more autonomy to public universities to seek additional funding as well as including private institutions in the competition for government subsidies through student-oriented grants or research funding is also a promising perspective in terms of giving equal opportunities to public and private institutions. Quality issues can also easily be seen to be of positive relevance to such a solution. The Bologna process, which initially aimed at creating similar structures in HE systems of member states, may bring the common trends towards solution of financing-

problems as well, even though so far the approaches to HE funding remain different in various countries.

It should be noted that globalization on its own is affected by governmental policies and even more by supranational political bodies like the European Union. The local European market in the contexts of global markets for higher education is creating itself. The Bologna process with its voluntary nature of intergovernmental agreement allowed EU to extend the geographical area for this common market over the borders of EU member states. Thus it is logical that member countries like Georgia which take the Bologna declaration as main guideline for reforming their HE system are adopting system structure, quality-assurance mechanisms, funding and university management strategies similar to those of Western Europe.

If a closer look at Georgian HE funding is taken on the current stage, we will find hybrid mechanisms demonstrating American features in European interpretation of it. In the new *Georgian Law on Higher Education* we clearly see the example of diversified funding mechanism to start functioning in the country. The law has special articles outlining that the funding sources of a higher education institution are as follows:

- (a) *Tuition fees which are covered by state education grant funds;*
- (b) *Funds received through private grants, contributions or a will;*
- (c) *Research grants awarded by the state on the basis of competition;*
- (d) *Special state-budgetary programs designed to encourage enrollment in those specialties of a higher education institution which represent priority for the state;*
- (e) *Program financing allocated by the ministries of a relevant field;*
- (f) *Any other sources of income allowed by Georgian legislation, including the revenues from economic activities.*

The Georgian model of HE financing from government reminds of simple voucher-models described in HE economics literature, which makes institutions to compete for students and research funds. Financing of Higher Education Institution from State Education Grant Funds

is carried out through financing the individual students enrolled in higher education institutions. In Georgia, student grants are mainly “performance-based” and cover the tuition fees of approximately one fourth of the whole number of students enrolled in HE institutions. All secondary-school graduates who want to enter a HE institution must pass the National Examination, and the outcome of this examination determines the future grantees. In terms of promoting equity, it would seem more proper to introduce the need-based grants in Georgia, though due to the still weak taxation-system and relatively low income rates for majority of population this would create problems for the system to determine the students with lower income family backgrounds than others. We may identify a merit-based granting system as very relevant to the Georgian situation as it is aimed to promote human-resource development for further success in economic rehabilitation of the country. The grant system in Georgia can develop further and/or be supplemented by a loan system well-probed in western countries to promote access and equity, when sufficient taxation-systems and graduate-markets are created. If supplementary student support systems from governments in the form of student grants and loans function properly, the systems with “demand steering” approach could afford both – selling education to those who can pay and helping those students from low-income families to participate in HE.

In this line *“The supplementation of higher education revenues by non-governmental sources – primarily students and family – is one of the major recommendations from the World Bank and most other development experts as one important solution to increasingly underfunded and overcrowded universities in the developing world (Johnstone, 2003:358)⁶*

Meanwhile *“WTO seeks to establish education as one of twelve internationally traded services, and reduce national controls over its regulation – including accreditation” (Douglass, 2005:6). But it is feared by many that “liberalization of trade in education may weaken government’s commitment to and investment in public higher education, promote privatization, and put countries with weak quality assurance mechanisms at a disadvantage in their countries by foreign providers” (Green 2004 in Douglass, 2005:7).*

⁶ Web document: http://esreview.soc.cas.cz/upl/archiv/files/238_34john32.pdf

The Bologna process is not focusing on trade liberalization in HE, but creating the “new market” with still traditional European features in terms of non-profit nature of the educational sector at least for domestic students on the current stage. It is a process focusing on independent participation of national systems and creates structural change through offering a common degree structure and credit transfer systems rather than remaking it into the service to be traded. But the “brain circulation” mechanism inside the new area will still put the countries with weak systems in disadvantage as far as the elitist nature of the best European universities will show itself in a new form through attracting the best staff and students and highest funding from national and supranational governments. The benefits and threats to the Georgian national HE system while participating in this process will be discussed in the later chapters.

5. The Impact of Europeanization on Georgian HE Policy – Formation

The Bologna process as an intergovernmental voluntary initiative which is not legally binding the HE systems of participant countries, still strongly influences the policy-directions of the nations committing themselves to the creation of a European area for higher education. This chapter will try to answer the second sub-question of the main research question: *What is the impact of Europeanization on national policy-formation in the course of current HE reform in Georgia?* Also the state steering model in HE relevant to the Georgian case throughout the post-soviet period and on the current stage of the reform will be distinguished.

5.1 A brief outline of European directions entering the post-soviet Georgian HE policy

Since the collapse of Soviet Union when the old borders ceased to exist, in order to prevent new forms of extreme nationalism and intolerance, Council of Europe started to seek for co-operation between European countries for harmonizing their co-existence and strengthening democracy, human rights, pluralism and quality of life for lasting peace in the whole area (Veld, Fussel & Neave, 1996). Reforming HE systems in this framework was identified as an important part of the process. Georgia was not participating in the course of legislative reforms carried out in HE since 1991 under the supervision of Council of Europe (The Legislative Reform Programme for higher education and research (LRP)) but was involved in the Council of Europe project “Education for Democratic Citizenship” since it was launched in 1997. Also, Georgia signed the Lisbon Convention in 1997 that was ratified by the Parliament in 1999. Georgia was also involved in the UNESCO project “Education for All” etc. In 1999 Georgia became the 41st member State of the Council of Europe.

The period which preceded actual identification of the directions for the future development of the Georgian HE system strongly relied on advises from different international

organizations and western experts. The profound analyses of the Georgian HE system before the Rose revolution are provided in several studies and offered needed recommendations to the Georgian government.⁷

It was in 2002, that the desire to integrate the Georgian HE system into the European area for higher education was clearly outlined in the decree “The Main Directions of Developing Higher Education in Georgia” passed by the Georgian parliament on 1 March, 2002. This decree gave the bases to the Law on Higher Education of Georgia accepted in 2004, on which the current system of HE is functioning in Georgia. The Law provided the normative match to the European directions to be taken in HE of Georgia and shortly after Georgia officially joined the Bologna process.

5.2 Legislation as main policy-instrument in the post-soviet Georgian HE

Legislation is perceived as a guide, in particular in periods of transition. (Veld & at el. 1996) In most cases it is not mere formalization of changes taking place in societies in transition but a driving force towards change. Legislation is often defined as both an instrument in itself and as a frame for the use of other instruments of policy. Georgian government, like governments in many post-socialist countries, out of four main policy-instruments for change – Nodality (information); Treasure (money); Authority (legal official power) and organization (Hood, 1983 in Gornitzka, 1999), heavily relied on legislation. This took place on the background of poor financing possibilities, obscure information on the exact directions of the reform and lacking professionals for new type of organizational

⁷ For further information the following documents can be accessed:

Lorentze (2000): “Georgian Education Sector Study - The Higher Education System” Copenhagen Business School, Department of International Economics and Management. Web document: http://www.mes.gov.ge/files/350_991_365595_HE_Finalnormal.pdf (retrieved from the official website of Georgian Ministry of Education and Science)

The Situational Analysis of the Higher Education System of Georgia (2003) (Within the Framework of the Eurasia Foundation founded project on the Evaluation of the Degree of Integration and Harmonization of the South Caucasus States with 1997 Lisbon Convention) Web document: http://www.eppm.org.ge/pdf/sitanalysis_Georgia.pdf

management for the HE institutions. Legislation was perceived as the main instrument for bringing major changes into the Georgian HE system.

5.3 Initial phases of legal reforms in the Georgian HE system

Globalization is believed to be creating new markets and forcing changes on different national systems including HE. This direction is clearly outlined through recommendations of international and donor organizations affecting the whole process of change including creation of legislative bases for the reforms in developing countries and those in a period of transition. But the simultaneous opinion that “all globalization is local” (Douglass, 2005) also finds practical relevance if a closer look at changes in national HE systems on micro level is taken. However different the share of global and local forces directing the national systems towards the above described directions may be, if going back to the concrete case of Georgian HE system, in the line of current reforms we can identify a number of factors influencing the system change simultaneously from both global and local perspectives. We could easily find an example of this synthesis if a look at the introduction of student fees and the private sector in the Georgian HE system is taken. In regards to this major change taking place in Georgian HE, which had exclusively a public character of a system in the Soviet context, we can argue that it was purely local necessity to allow the academics to seek for salaries in the private sector and also to let the public universities diversify their funding mechanism in order to survive in the period of economic stagnation. The Ministry of Education could find no other solution to the problem of lacking HE funding to which government had always been responsible in the Soviet period but letting the private sector to emerge in the system and also introducing student fees as a source of additional funding inside the public sector. However, it was never given legal bases, the majority of private universities in the initial period of their introduction in the system served as for-profit organizations for their founders. With the high level of corruption inside the public sector and simultaneously the prestigious nature of education for Georgians, these private universities with lower student-fees massified and almost universalized HE in terms of access. The Ministry of Education was authorized to issue the licenses and in about three years 294 higher educational institutions had been licensed. The quality and academic excellence was never controlled by any bodies, and the private institutions acted like

diploma mills. The number of diploma-holders reached almost universal figures while the state was unable to provide the graduates with relevant employment places. The biggest problem was created in imbalance within the acquired professions. Due to the so called “prestigious nature” of medicine and law, the majority was obtaining diplomas in these very fields while the inadequacy with the extremely weak job-market was growing fast. Each year the system of medical schools granted medical diplomas to about 3, 000 youth, while the Georgian medical system needs no more than 300 young physicians per year (UNDP, 2000). At that period, the university rectors were enjoying almost absolute freedom in governing their institutions both in the public and private sector. In the public sector, which included the universities with longest history and best traditions in teaching, this period intensified the problem of corruption through student admission procedures.

In relevance to the above mentioned processes spontaneously taking place in Georgian HE we can argue that the first phase of legislative reform in post-Soviet Georgia served partly as “formalization” of the actual changes taken place in HE system mostly at institutional level rather than enforcing those changes onto the system through governmental planning and usage the legislation as a reform-instrument. It means that the initiatives taken on the institutional level of individual universities influenced the creation of normative match to the practical changes taking place in the system and not vice-versa.

The legal framework for Georgian private higher education is found inside the context of the overall higher education legal framework of the country. As already stated out, in regards to private HE in post-communist Georgia, the changes took place mostly from institutional level in terms of governmental inactions in the first phase, though there are several noteworthy legal acts of the period concerning private HE. These are: *The Decree of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia* (1991) that facilitated private higher Education development and *The Decree of the State Council of Georgia* (1992), conferring autonomy to higher education institutions. An additional significant change came about in 1993 when public institutions were authorized to admit self-financed students.

In 1995, “State Program for Education Reform and a plan for its Realization” was approved and the second phase of Georgian HE system-change started. In 1997, *Education Law* was accepted. It gave normative match to the practices initiated at the micro-institutional level and already being in operation. Thus the law provided legal grounding to the informal

reforms taking place in the system including functioning of the private institutions and widespread policy of admitting self financing students into public institutions. It also took step towards changing the structural features of higher education towards western features. The two-level system of undergraduate and graduate studies which had been first launched by the Tbilisi State University in 1994-95 was approved. Before this change throughout the Soviet past and the post-soviet period, Georgian universities were granting 5 year diplomas as the first-degree and the higher cycles of education envisaged carrying out “candidate” and later “doctoral” research at different research institutes within Academy of Science. The law also envisaged curriculum reform and gave definition to state education standards. The bases for quality assurance mechanism was also provided, though in practice it did not ensure any radical changes to reduce the number of low-quality private universities as well as study-programs and input-standards. Vice-versa, the further numerous governmental decrees and ministerial orders were aimed to regulate private enrolment growth via licensing, attestation and accreditation procedures which in fact had very little to do with quality-assurance efforts. The Licensing Committee was established which developed guidelines for a new accreditation procedure and after a two-year pause the Ministry renewed giving out licenses for private higher education institutions. Enactment of *the Law of Georgia on Licensing Entrepreneurial Activities* in 1999, provided with terms and requirements for licensing of entrepreneurial undertakings in general and of educational activities in particular. In 1999 *the Presidential Decree* following the proposal of the Ministry and the Rectors’ Council, authorized the Professors’ Council to confer academic titles⁸.

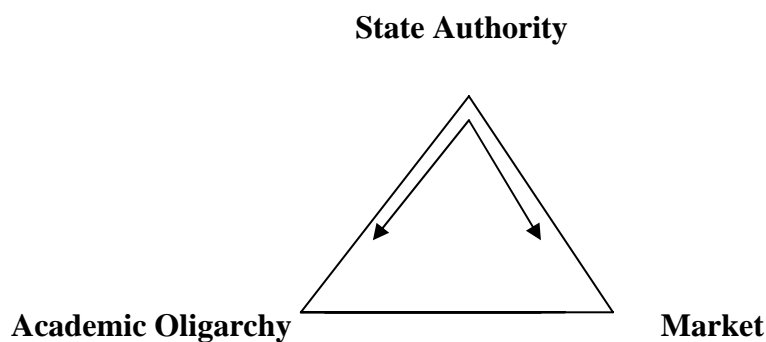
The above retrospective outline of the first phase in post-Soviet Georgia’s HE system-change does not provide with any convincement of *European dimension* strongly influencing the policy-making process in Georgia. It can be partly explained by the generally ambiguous political directions of the country during “Shevardnadze period” when simultaneous Western and Russian influences on independent Georgia were creating controversial and unframed influence from macro level on the country’s development on all its structural levels, and the actual reforms were initiated locally in the micro-context.

⁸ The Legal Framework for Georgian Private Higher Education (outline by Marie Pachuashvili), Web document:
http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/data/Country_Law/GeoLegalFramwork.doc

The state-steering changes in Georgian HE of post-soviet period can be identified through my interpretation of Clark's *Triangle of coordination* (Clark, 1983:143). Originally it was used by Clark as visual schematic frame to demonstrate the differences in university governance forms throughout different national systems. The three actors involved in the form of governance, universal for all HE systems but with different share of influences, were the *state authority*, the *academic oligarchy* and the *market*. Each corner of the triangle represented the extreme of one form and the minimum of the other two. Clark located different countries inside the triangle according to the combinations of the three elements in different degrees identified in their HE governance form. Some of the countries were placed near the extremes. For instance, Soviet Union represented the case where the state took complete control over oligarchic and market interactions, while US was placed to the extreme market corner.

If we adapt the Clark's triangle of coordination to the single case of Georgia, we can come up with figuring the following historical and present shifts in governance and coordination in Georgian HE:

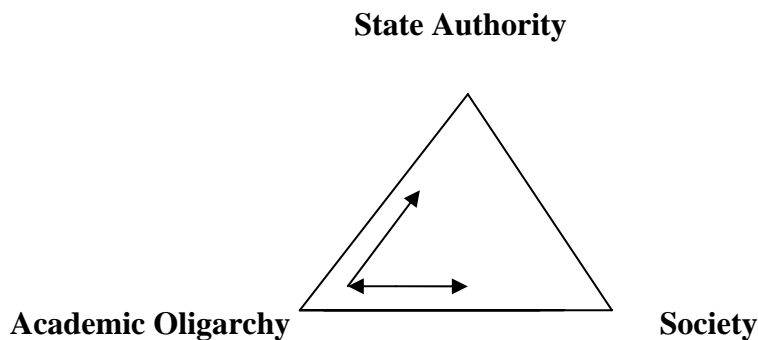
Figure 3.1: Georgian HE Coordination in Soviet period



The **figure 3.1** shows the central role of Soviet government in educational and market planning while the weakest line of coordination lied between the academic oligarchy and market. Academic oligarchy of the time was quite influential but more on institutional level than on the system level – e.g. practically supreme local power of the rectors was present in Soviet universities. A distinct market also existed not in free mode but in a carefully planned

form. The coordination between these two actors – the academic oligarchy and the market was fully controlled by the state.

Figure 3.2: Coordination in Georgian HE system in the post-Soviet period until 2004



The figure 3.2 shows the shift in HE steering when state authority was itself being influenced by the initiatives taken from the academic oligarchy on micro-institutional level. I substituted *Market* angle with *Society* as far as no actual market can be identified as an actor in the context of post-soviet Georgian HE. Society was the active actor taking part in the coordination with the demands on massified HE. In Georgia, education always was specially perceived as of prestigious nature and even in terms of the Soviet education-system heavily depending on planned-economy, Georgia had the highest percentage of the population with a university degree among the republics of the Soviet Union (Sharvashidze, 2002). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, student enrolment into public and newly-created private HE institutions reached almost universal figures though no exactly reliable data is to be provided. In spite of low quality in education and irrelevance to job-market, these institutions kept the youth out of the street and also provided them with hope for future possibilities to find a job. This causes ambivalence in evaluating the role played by HE institutions of that period for decreasing the quality of HE itself on one hand and for making some positive contributions to the society on the other. This triangle shows the one-way influence the academic oligarchy had on policy-making processes by state authorities and the two-way influence between the academic oligarchy and society.

5.4 The current phase of legal reform in the Georgian HE system

It is only the third, current phase of legislative reform in Georgian HE in the context of overall reform that bears the strong European influence. Even though the actual reform of the HE system alongside with other systems started since the peaceful “Rose revolution” took place in November, 2003 and a new government with extreme orientation to the West came into power in the country, the preparatory works towards the reform were launched few years before the change started to take place.

2001 can be taken as the year when a new phase in Georgian HE system reform was launched with the groundwork prepared for a new law on higher education. This time the legislation was meant to play the role of a main policy-instrument in the course of reform, and the initiative came from the Georgian Parliament with the support by the Council of Europe and the Open Society – Georgia Foundation. This very fact already shows the western influence on the process of policy-formation in Georgian HE from the very beginning of the third and currently continuing phase of the reform. The desire to integrate with the European educational area was first publicly voiced in the decree “*The Main Directions of Developing Higher Education in Georgia*”⁹ passed by the parliament on 1 March, 2002. Adoption of this decree did not go smoothly due to still ambiguous general political directions of the pre-revolution Georgia, but still was adopted by the second hearing. When speaking of the European dimension entering and influencing the Georgian policy-making process in HE at that period, we should note that the recommendations taken by Georgian authorities in this process was not uniquely of European character but also the experience of American and Japanese universities (University of Chicago and Chiba University) had been shared. The role of donor organizations in this line of reform was huge and it is directly outlined in the decree that without their help Georgia would not have possibility to launch this reform project. The Open Society—Georgia Foundation, US exchange programmes such as IREX, Muskie, and Fulbright, The German DAAD giving

⁹ The Main Directions of Developing Higher Education in Georgia, Decree of the Parliament of Georgia (2002). Web document can be accessed at:
<http://www.eppm.org.ge/pdf/Main%20Direction%20of%20HE%20Development.pdf>

funding support to Georgian students studying abroad, EU and the World Bank, other donors including UNESCO, the Council of Europe, numerous foundations, professional organizations, and many more are mentioned as main contributors to the process.

The necessity of introducing market forces in regulation of HE system is outlined in the decree (2002): *“The changes the Conceptual Paper recommends set the respective roles of the state and the market onto new footing. The market is important because it introduces competition to a hitherto closed sector, both public and private. It also mobilizes resources. When individuals pay for their education, they free up public funds that the state can then spend on other tasks. And the state is important because it specifies the rules that make the market work in Georgia’s best interest without pretending to micromanage specific outcomes.”*

The European dimension of the reform clearly manifests itself in the decree. The state is expected to provide with the rules that make the market work in Georgia’s best interest and to give the public and private providers of higher education enjoy the same rights and responsibilities. In the line of European tradition, higher education institutions are given a special non-profit status in Georgia.

The different problems like lack of funding, of educational policy planning and management, outdated curricula, teaching and learning methods, limited flexibility in career choice, corruption and elitism are attributed in the decree and the clear aims and objectives for system change are outlined. Joining the Bologna process is already mentioned in the decree as a strategy for Georgian HE to develop towards European standards in HE:

“Following the 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the Europe Region, European ministers of education pledged in a series of declarations –in Bologna in 1999, and in Prague in 2001 – to create a European area of higher education. They aimed at adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees based on two main cycles, namely undergraduate and graduate. They also promised to establish a system of credits – such as ECTS – to promote the most widespread student mobility, along with institutionalized recognition of research and teaching time staff spent abroad. Finally, they agreed to promote co-operation in quality assurance, curriculum development, mobility schemes, integrated programs of study, and training and research.

In sum, the aim of higher education reform is to create a sustainable system based on the objectives of

- *non-discriminatory access*
- *high, measurable quality*
- *high, verifiable relevance.*

To achieve this aim Georgia must make strategic choices. “

This very decree served as the basis on which the local authorities through recommendations of international experts and with formal participation of HE institution representatives drafted the new law on education. The draft was later refined and developed by the new, post-revolution team of Ministry of Education and Science. After the new political turn to the west that Georgia took in the post-revolution period, the reforms in the HE like in many other sectors started to be rapid and radical. The “shock-therapy” to the system created much controversy and opposition among parts of academics and society in large. But this time the government acted as fully determined to successfully carry out the reform it launched, and legislation served as the main instrument to enforce the change upon the universities which are notoriously known as institutions extremely conservative towards reforms with strong beliefs and traditions embodied inside their walls.

If we return back to the triangle of HE coordination (Clark, 1983), the model we can draw is radically different from the one describing the first phase in post-soviet Georgian HE developments.

Figure 3.3: Georgian HE Coordination on the current stage

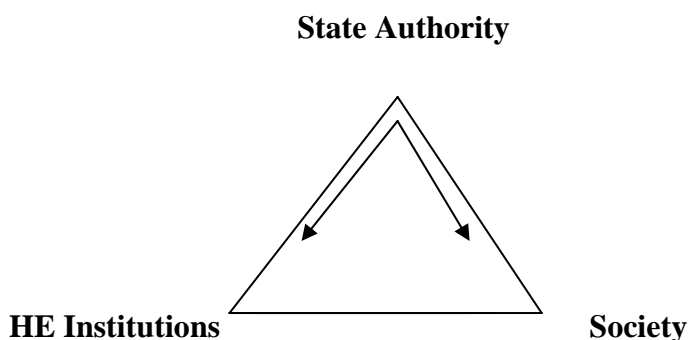


Figure 3.3 reminds more of the soviet model in coordination than to the later one of post-soviet period. The strong supervisory role is back to government. I substituted the angle of

Academic Oligarchy with *HE Institutions* due to the new managerial and structural reforms enforced on universities in the course of reform and changing the supreme role of academic governance in them. At the same time *Society* is still kept at the third angle as far as distinct features of market are still to be created for substitution. *The State* influences both the HE institutions and society to accept new line of reform mainly through its regulatory mechanism.

In the *Law on Higher Education of Georgia* passed in December 2004, the most important changes include: introducing new financial mechanisms based on vouchers, creating student support grant system based on merit, separation of administrative and academic functions in (public) university governance, introducing new-degree system (three-cycle education) relevant to European area for HE and setting up accreditation and unified national examination procedures. In regards to private institutions we can find that the Law on Higher Education (2004) together with the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurial Activities (1999) and the Civil Code of Georgia (1997) regulate private institutions.¹⁰ The Law on Higher Education does not differentiate between private and public higher education institutions, though private institutions are subject to less governmental power and control (Chapter II on “Management of Higher Education System”). The Law grants private institutions with more self-regulation in organizing institutions and defining hiring policies. In this line Chapter IV on “Structure of Higher Education Institutions” Chapter V on “Personnel of Higher Education Institutions” (with the exception of articles 32 and 35), and Chapter XIV on “Property of Higher Education Institutions” do not apply to privately owned educational institutions.

As for the seeking for impacts of European dimension on the current law, we can say that it is in primary relevance to the Bologna directions. The Law envisages the regulations like adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees through the standardized

¹⁰ Two important studies of the private sector formation and development in Georgian HE system were conducted by George Sharvashidze in 2002 and 2005. These documents can be accessed at:

<http://www.eppm.org.ge/pdf/Private%20HE%20in%20Georgia%5B1%5D.pdf>
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001405/140561e.pdf>

diploma supplement issued in one of the internationally spoken languages and free of charge (Ch. I Art. 2, Point “p”); Reserving a third of the seats for students in the representative bodies known as the senates at the universities (Ch. IV Art. 17 Point 4); Providing autonomy and academic freedom to higher education institutions (Ch. IV); Assuring synergy between higher education and research (Ch. VII); Adopting a three-cycle degree system (Ch. VII Art. 46 Point 2. Subpoint “a” “b” “c”), Assuring quality through the accreditation procedures (Ch. X and Ch. XI); Awarding the state grants to the students with the highest scores at the Unified National Admission Exams (CH XIII Art. 80); Adopting the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (Ch. XV, Art.87 Point 8).¹¹

In general, developments taking place in the Georgian HE system in the current phase of a reform and its legislative basis can be identified as harmonization with the regional features of the future European area for HE in the larger context of global trends in HE.

In addition, it can be said that however officially European governments are opposing to change, the traditional function of a leader in HE coordination, the processes taking place across individual national system demonstrate directions taken towards a “market-state” steering model. So far Georgia may be regarded as a “sovereign state” if put into the classification of state steering and control-system level characteristics (Gornitzka, 1999:22). The coming phase of the reform may be creating distinct features of the market as a leading actor in the Georgian system and giving the main role to it in the mechanism of coordination. With less funding responsibilities the state will preserve a regulatory and thus a supervisory function towards the system.

¹¹ The full version of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education (2004) can be retrieved from official website of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science:

http://www.mes.gov.ge/files/255_436_600942_DATOS%20FILE.doc

Figure 3.4: Future possible model of coordination of Georgian HE

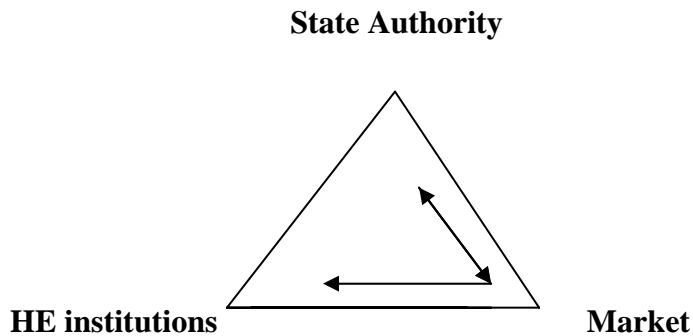


Figure 3.4 presents the possible model of future coordination of the Georgian HE system since market forces become strong enough to substitute the current angle of society. Two-way influence may be present in terms of changing market demands and state steering through regulatory mechanism, while HE institutions will heavily rely on market influences. In this model the weakest side of coordination is between the state and HE institutions. Once the state ensures creation of substantial market, it can give more self-regulatory power to the HE institutions and let the market to lead the coordination of the system, while the state retreats to supervisory position with less funding obligations, though preserving the main regulatory function.

5.5 Main achievements and criticism of the policy-reform in Georgian HE

If a brief overview of the practical outcomes of current policy-reform in the Georgian HE system is made, we will easily identify that the reform has been successful at least on the given stage for the two major achievements:

1. There are substantial steps made in the line of *fight over corruption*, which was one of the major disasters for the public sector of Georgian HE even in Soviet times and more violently in post-soviet pre-revolutionary years. The introduction of Unified National Admission Exams instead of the old entrance examinations in individual universities and vouchering HE institutions on input bases dramatically changed the picture of the past, when the least

qualified students could enter the most prestigious universities through bribing. The last two years with the changed mechanism caused great satisfaction in public and even those conservative academics and part of society greatly opposing the reform appreciate this achievement. The legislative basis for the new mechanism for student admission is provided by the law (Art. 89:4)

2. *Assuring quality* was significantly achieved through the university accreditation procedures. Since 2004 the Accreditation Council of Higher Education Institutions was set which conducted institutional accreditation in January, 2005. Consequently out of 237 HE institutions applying less than half – 113 were accredited and those staying outside of required standards were not allowed to admit students (Ministry of Education and Science). The accreditation procedure consists of the second step allowing the failing institutions to re-apply. The program-accreditation mechanism is also being elaborated. This undoubtedly creates some basis for quality achievement in Georgian HE institutions after 15 years of lacking any practical quality assurance mechanism.

The main criticism we would give to the reform lays in following:

1. More *neo-institutional approach* to the reform could be given. Georgian government heavily relies on legislative imposition of the change upon the universities. “*For organizations to change as a result of government initiatives a normative match is necessary, i.e. congruence between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed programme or policy and the identity and traditions of the organization*” (Gornitzka,1999:9) but the response to the demands of change by the universities as organizations with an old history and beliefs can not be automatic and passive but “*active and volitional*” (Gornitzka: 1999:7) The current reform was met by old public universities with great resistance not only due to academic characteristics of conservatism, but also for lack of *information* as a very important policy-instrument in the course of reform. With the old European traditions in teaching and research Georgian academics would embrace the change easier if the relevant informational public relation campaign was carried out by the Ministry of Education. Also, while trying to bring the new-managerialism inside the traditional universities, the government could seek for more collaboration on the institutional level. It is clear that in order to make universities more independent, enjoying fully their autonomy and to make them responding to increasing massification, diversification and competition challenges of

the market, restructuring of the universities is necessary. Introducing strong institutional management is needed for making the universities not just to function under the general legislations provided by ministries like in old bureaucratic administrative traditions, but also to be more self-regulatory and to direct their resources to maximal outcomes. However necessary, the new mechanism should not only try to make the institution adapt to it, but also, it should put an effort to adapting itself to the environmental culture in which it will have to operate. Not only the universities in general, but each of them in particular should be seen as a complex institution worthy of careful study. The reform so far carried out by Georgian Ministry of Education clearly lacks this perspective. Often the recruitment of new rectors and managerial staff for the universities in the course of the change is made not from internal circles but more from outside that does not follow European tradition and makes the process painful in the controversy of traditional ideals of academia and new market-oriented shifts in university governance.

2. While looking forward to transform its system towards the directions of the Bologna process, there is obvious *lack in identifying exact local needs, strengths and peculiarities* for the development of the Georgian system of HE. The Bologna process is creating a common area for structurally similar systems of European countries but with different political and economical backgrounds. It is a voluntary intergovernmental agreement to make an area for national systems with common degree and credit systems, but Bologna will not guarantee the balance in brain-circulation or creation of appropriate funding mechanism for individual systems. It will be up to national governments to set up their strategy for not only regional but local development of the system. With its long history in research and education, though in a complex geopolitical and economical situation, Georgia should strive not to lose its best traditions in HE but to use it as a basement for building up its new system. The main strength of Georgia is its intellectual potential inherited by the rich tradition in education and strong scientific institutions of the past. Development of human resources is the major base for integration with Europe and building up a strong statehood. So far, Georgia is still in the process of finding its place in collaboration with the international society. Reform of Higher Education and development of high-level doctoral programs should become an important component in this development. In terms of poor finances and priority given to only market-oriented projects in science, Georgia may lose traditions in research spheres like history, art, philosophy, and mathematics, especially

strong in Georgia. The careful study for defining the priority-programs should be conducted in search for the ways of rescuing those fields which are presently not actual, but may prove special in the future perspectives.

5.6 The Bologna Process as a guideline for Future changes in Georgian HE

As we have already identified, the *Europeanization* process did not make an important impact on the first phases of post-soviet developments in the Georgian HE system, though it was partly already present in the reform through Georgian collaboration with different European organizations. It was the third, current phase in Georgian HE policy-reform that clearly demonstrated its European nature giving basis to the current legislation on Georgian higher education. Today, the Europeanization process can be described as the main driving force for system change in Georgia on all levels. The Bologna process constitutes the framework for the changes currently taking place in the system, and the future directions seem to be even more closely linked to *Europeanization* of the Georgian HE. The national strategic framework-programme for implementing the Bologna process has been created.¹² The basic priority directions of the reform are defined such as: elaborating the national qualifications framework; fully implementing the three-cycle degree-system – among these introducing doctoral degree on the basis of synergy between education and research in Georgian universities; developing quality assurance mechanisms; introducing European Credit Transfer and Accreditation Systems; Promoting mobility-recognition of academic degrees; introducing the principles of lifelong learning in HE institutions and others.

¹² An important document providing the full information on European dimension of current Georgian HE reform is “Main Directions and Action Plan for Implementing the Bologna Process in Georgia until 2010” (Tbilisi, 2005) The document is prepared jointly by EURASIA foundation, CSI and USAID in collaboration with Georgian experts. The document provides with the information on what is achieved so far in Georgian HE towards Bologna, tasks fulfilled within the project, analyzing strategies, strengths, weaknesses, threats and priority directions of development. The document can be accessed at:

Web document: <http://bologna-supporters.ge/pdf/Main%20Directionsn.pdf>

“Bologna supporters group”, a voluntary union of different HE stakeholders has been created with the initiative from Georgian Ministry of Education and Science¹³.

The main objectives of the reform are to be achieved until 2010 in accordance to the Bologna agreement, which is a real challenge for Georgian HE system with its numerous weaknesses and especially unfavourable economic situation. Meanwhile the long-term perspectives for the future development of the national system are still to be elaborated.

¹³ Website of the Bologna supporters group can be accessed at: www.bologna-supporters.ge

6. Possible Benefits and Threats of Europeanization for the Georgian Higher Education System

In this chapter, the focus will be shifted to the national and cultural dimension of HE reform in Georgia in connection to its regional dimension and answer the third sub-question of the main research question: *What are the possible benefits and threats of Europeanization for the national system of Georgian HE?* While historically political and cultural aspects were more important in the formation of national HE systems, nowadays it is clear that economic rationale is increasingly central in the processes which drives HE systems into the context of globalization. As already outlined, regionalization of HE systems through of Europeanization is to be seen as a process with its own particularities but still inside the more general global context of market-driven changes in HE systems. Meanwhile, striving to build the knowledge-based information society is primarily the national aim of the participating countries. The Georgian government has announced this objective to be the central one to be achieved through its current HE reform. Georgians have strong national and cultural identity based on old educational traditions. Thus their expectation towards the current reform is not to loose the existing identity but to enrich it.

6.2 Benefits of Europeanization for the Georgian HE system

As already outlined, the European context is not something new for the Georgian system of education. The academic beliefs and values embodied in Georgian universities are originally European and bear strong national aspects. But on the current stage the national and cultural dimensions are to be identified as weakening dimensions in all modern HE systems. The developing countries and those in a transition-period like Georgia are even greater subjects to this process than countries with well-developed economies. In this sense, Georgia is also to be found in an unfavourable position in comparison to western and central European countries and their national HE systems inside the Bologna process. But before looking at weaknesses and threats to the Georgian national system inside the new context, we should identify the benefits it receives from participating in the Bologna process.

1. The Bologna process constitutes realistic framework for the constructive reform in Georgian HE system to take place. It provides the Georgian government with patterns common for the future European area for HE to reshape the structural features of the system in relevance to the general modern processes taking place in HE. Changing of degree structures, introducing credit system, launching institutional and managerial reforms, curricula reform, creating frameworks like “National Qualifications of the Higher Education Area” according to the “European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning” are some of these patterns which should foster development of the entire system of Georgian HE. (Main Directions and Action Plan for Implementing the Bologna Process in Georgia Until 2010. Tbilisi, 2005: 10). Putting the regulations concerning the rights and competences of the university management, opening the decision-making for student-participation and insuring the transparency of budget-planning and management towards the European standards are also important steps towards democratization and development of the universities in Georgia.

2. Participating in the Bologna process literally made it possible to fight corruption in Georgian universities that was the major drawback of the Georgian HE system for not only the post-soviet years of chaotic developments, but also in the Soviet period. While corruption manifested itself in all levels of the system, the university admissions was perhaps the most corrupt area in Georgian HE. With its goal to drive the system towards European standards, the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science changed the mechanism of entrance examinations which used to be held locally at individual HE institutions for admitting students to HE. This mechanism was inherited by the system from the Soviet period and was inefficient and highly subjective. The new transparent procedure through Unified National Admissions Exam (UNAE) was successfully implemented and carried out for the past two years and constituted one of the biggest achievements of current reform. It was largely approved by the whole society of Georgia.

3. Achieving Bologna goals stimulated the Georgian government for launching quality-control mechanisms practically non-existing in previous period. As far as one of the main requirements of the Bologna process is to promote international cooperation in quality assurance, the future stage of creating a quality assurance system in Georgia should create the intra-university and national quality assurance services of learning, teaching and research in line with European standards. On the current stage, the reform has provided the system

with a national accreditation center and quality assurance services operating at national level following the common standards, procedures and rules as stated in the Berlin Communiqué (2003) (Main Directions and Action Plan for Implementing the Bologna Process in Georgia Until 2010. Tbilisi, 2005: 14)

4. The creation of a common European area for education first of all focuses on stimulating student and staff mobility inside the new educational market. It opens larger possibility for Georgian students and researchers to study and work in Europe, receive joint degrees, conduct joint research, establish not only individual but intra-university links through separate faculties or entire institutions. Through these relationships some Georgian universities may succeed in acquiring wider importance than local if human resources management offices are established and contribute actively to recruitment of staff both from local as well as international arena. Internationalization will serve positively for reputation of universities, student recruitment, and possibilities of cooperation with foreign universities, stepping into bilateral agreements on student exchange, joint research and other activities. Collaboration between universities, joint projects and exchange programs will stimulate the Georgian HE market to develop. This on its own will contribute to diversification of local funding and getting access to foreign investment by the universities involved in the process. But alongside to economic benefits the process will first of all greatly contribute to cultural relations between European countries and give Georgians better opportunities to represent their country internationally.

6.3 Threats of Europeanization for the Georgian HE system

The possible threats of Europeanization to the Georgian HE system can be identified as common with most East-European post-socialist states:

1. First of all, there is a classical problem of “brain drain”. Even if inside the European Area for Higher Education the “brain drain” could be seen as regional “brain circulation”, there is much possibility that the imbalance between the students leaving and entering Georgian HE system will be high. Though the Bologna agreement is not fully implemented and the future mechanisms of mobility may strive for creating some kind of balance in this sense, on the current stage it is a fact that the mobility between Georgia and Western Europe has clearly

one direction. For instance “According to data of the German side in 2003-2004 German students studying in Georgia comprised only 0, 69 % of the number of Georgian students studying in Germany” ((Main Directions and Action Plan for Implementing the Bologna Process in Georgia Until 2010. Tbilisi, 2005:18) There is a high possibility that through Bologna process the mobility of Georgian students and academics to Western and Central European universities will increase even greater, while the Georgian system may not only lack foreign students participating in its HE, but also loose the attractiveness of its own universities for its own students and academic staff.

At the same time it is maybe one of the most important challenges for Georgian system of HE to manage to preserve its talents and to manage recruiting its citizens who work or receive education in advanced countries by offering them needed conditions for work and study, including salaries, scholarships, library facilities and technical equipments. For a country with weak economic development, this may prove to be very difficult.

2. While student and skilled human resource mobility is taken as essential for the creation of a regional European market for HE, different HE systems and different HE institutions within them are going to respond differently to this process. The best of them already have and will acquire increasingly international, regional or global features; while others will remain of just local importance. It is a fact that so far Georgian universities cannot compete with leading European universities in global and international perspectives. For Georgia it will be extremely difficult to create a few or even a single elitist university among its HE institutions with the international importance within Bologna and larger global context.

It is clear that “dissolving boundaries raise issues of identity, structure, co-ordination and regulation” (Middlehurst, 2001). These changes may lead to universities losing part of their national identity, substituting it for a global identity for some, and regional or local identity for others. To what extent the loss on one side (traditional values, cultural heritage, etc.) is compensated by benefits on the other (international awareness, knowledge about cross-cultural issues, comparability and transparency) remains a topic for debate.” (Beerens, 2004: 23-151)

Not to rely only on general reform, the Georgian universities need argent self-analysis which so far they lack on all institutional levels: structural, governance, academic and program. This analysis has to be carried out in connection to the larger national and European context

in which they are to operate. It means that they should define their role in society, place in the HE market, make identification of their own stakeholders, relevance to the current national and international legislative norms and identify their future strategies for development.

3. Lack of financial resources may drive the Georgian state to provide low national funding for research. It may deconstruct further the historically established schools of science in certain fields and cause the loss of strong traditions in research in those spheres which are not identified as actual for the modern stage of development of the country but have strong potential of development in future perspectives. Minimum one, if not more research-oriented universities should be established under high state supervision at least on the first stage of its development not to submit the Georgian students only to one-way mobility to pursue graduate studies in other countries of Europe, as well as the best scientists to find the universities of other European states as their homes.

One of the demands for future collaboration between the Bologna member countries is to offer similar degree-programs (three step HE: BA, MA, PhD) in their accredited universities. Scientific research and teaching are being brought together (in terms of introducing PhD programs inside Georgian universities) against to the soviet background of the Academy of Science with its research institutes being an institution separate from the teaching universities. This very change on the organizational level of HE in response to government policies and programmes has been a subject of a great controversy in Georgia.

In fact, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, what was left from the Georgian Academy of Science was no more than the buildings of its research universities with scarcely any material-technical base for scientific research to be conducted and with its employees who stayed at the office more out of the professional habit and prestige, believing in future possibilities for research conditions. Those scientists who had foreign language skills and found links to the western universities have long left the system. In accordance to advices from Western experts and in accordance to Bologna demands, the Georgian government gave priorities to creating an entirely new platform for research inside Georgian universities. Unable to finance parallel systems, it started the process of closing the Georgian Academy of Science, which caused public dissatisfaction widely. Having so far no normative match on the issue even within the new Law on Higher Education of Georgia (2004), the policy of

government seems to face problems in interaction with the public opinion on the issue. Many Georgians within academia as well as ordinary citizens think that the new law is driving HE towards only training functions as far as it closes the traditional base of the Academy of Sciences which could serve as an easier way towards new efforts to build up a scientific society of the future HE system of Georgia; while at the same time the government can not guarantee proper funding for the new research programs to be introduced at the universities.

“ It is evident, that the main financing of the doctoral programs in Georgia in the nearest future will be made the government, even though the universities should already start seeking the additional sources of financing their doctoral programs, as far as otherwise many programs may be doomed to be closed. Because of the value being high for most of the doctoral programs, it is not realistic to imagine having many self-financing doctoral students in the country. This is how the only alternative the existence of special state programs in priority field seems to be so far, but the number of such fields is limited that makes development of other fields of study under the question” (PhD Concept Paper, Center for Social Sciences, Tbilisi 2005)¹⁴

In terms of poor finances and priority given to only market-oriented projects in science, Georgia may lose strong traditions in researching spheres like history, art and philosophy, or mathematics, the school of which was especially strong in Georgia. This is why there must be created careful programs for defining the priority-spheres and seeking for the ways of rescuing those fields which are presently not actual, but may prove special in the future perspectives. Otherwise Georgian HE system faces a serious threat of losing science and turning into a peripheral system with mainly teaching objectives taken by its universities.

Through the present analyses we have only touched upon few of the benefits and threats for the Georgian HE system entering the European context through its current reform. To what extent the benefits will be used and problems overcome, largely depends on the Georgian national reform of the HE system itself and the general processes to which the Bologna process will lead its participants.

¹⁴ Web document: <http://www.tsu.ge/qa/doc/PhD%20Concept%20Paper%20eng.pdf>

7. Conclusions

Through the present study we identified the regional dimension as historically characterizing Georgian HE system. Present Europeanization of the system is to be seen as a new substitution to the old regional context within the same dimension, while European values and beliefs in education are historically the closest to Georgian HE.

The tensions between different processes influencing the HE reform in Georgia were identified. Globalization (Americanization) and Regionalization (Europeanization) are to be seen as the main processes influencing the national system change in Georgia. On the current stage the regional European dimension through Bologna process constitutes the main framework for the developments taking place in Georgian HE system, also putting this system in the context of globalization in HE.

Using the theories on governance, globalization and regionalization for analyzing the empiric data (official documents of the Georgian HE reform period) led to identifying the several stages of the shifts taken place in coordination of Georgian HE system since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The changing actors involved in the HE coordination mechanism as well as the changing role of the state in HE steering was identified. On the present stage the HE steering model in Georgia is of *sovereign state* features with possible *market state* directions taken in the future.

When addressing the first sub-question: *What is the global context of the regional dimension in the Reform of Georgian HE system?*, the political and economic dimension of the Georgian HE reform has been brought in connection with its regional dimension. We identified the political context in which the actual reform towards Europeanization of the Georgian HE system took place. The linkage between the political and economical dimension and regional dimension of the Georgian HE reform was made in the wider context of globalization. Political developments taking place in Georgia in the past four years are to be seen as the context which made coherent and systematic developments possible to take place in the national HE system towards Europeanization. With its political and economical rationale following the process to its beginnings leads us to finding strong

American support and influence on Georgian policy-making. On the other hand, European regions in HE itself is to be found in the larger context of globalization in HE, which primarily bears American directions towards market-driven HE spreading itself into different regions and with different local interpretations.

When answering the second sub-question: *What is the impact of Europeanization on national policy-formation in the course of current HE reform in Georgia?*, we identified Europeanization as of the greatest influence on Georgian policy-formation in the current stage. Though lacking its influence on Georgian universities for more than a decade in the post-soviet period, after the “Rose Revolution” Georgia shifted back to a sovereign-state steering model and relied heavily on legislation as its policy instrument in the course of HE reform. The whole reform was put into the framework of the Bologna agreement. European directions greatly influenced the creation of new normative match to the HE reform (Law on Higher Education and other policy-documents) accepted in Georgia. On the current stage, legislation remains as the main policy instrument for Georgian government in the course of the reform. In general, like in other aspects, in policy-formation, the Europeanization process created the main framework for the current Georgian HE reform and gave coherent and systematic character to the process.

Answering the third sub-question: *What are the possible benefits and threats of Europeanization for the national system of HE of Georgia?* led us to identify a number of advantages given by Europeanization perspectives to the national HE system of Georgia. Some of the main benefits are already visible: the Bologna process coordinated reform efforts taken by the Georgian government and gave the realistic framework to its directions. Fighting corruption in Georgian universities through adopting western models became easier. Changing the entrance examination mechanism was a successful reform in this line. Quality-control mechanisms started to work and institutional accreditation was successfully carried out that reduced the number of HE institutions with inadequate material-technical bases for giving quality education. Further developments of quality-assurance and control will take place in accordance to the European standards. The joint area for student and staff-mobility will open new markets for Georgia which has strong intellectual resources. Collaboration between universities, joint projects and exchange programs will give more possibility for Georgians to represent their country internationally.

Meanwhile, the Georgian educational system faces threats of becoming a peripheral system inside the new region due to the lack of substantial funding for science in its universities. Abolishing the old structure of the Academy of Science and bringing back research to universities to build a new platform for the doctoral study programs as the third cycle in the common degree-structure in accordance to Bologna demands, does not guarantee the development of Georgian science. If the government fails to identify the priority spheres in research and provide them with strong support, the historically strong schools of science may be lost in Georgia. Also, if some mechanisms for assuring minimal balance in student and staff migration are not created, the problem of “brain drain” will not release with “brain circulation perspectives” inside the future European Area for Higher Education as far as Georgian students and academics are greatly subdued to one-way mobility to the western universities.

Finally, it can be said that, the number of studies of the Georgian HE system and its current reform already exist though there are almost no attempts of theorization of the process in connection to existing globalization and governance literature on Higher Education. This thesis provides such an attempt. Thus in the present thesis the regional dimension of Georgian HE system has been analyzed in relation to its global, supranational and national aspects which hopefully leaves the perspectives for further studies.

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